United Nations

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People

General Assembly
Official Records • Fiftieth Session
Supplement No.35 (A/50/35)

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

15 November 1995

Sir,

I have the honour to enclose herewith the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People for submission to the General Assembly in accordance with paragraph 5 of its resolution 49/62 A of 14 December 1994.

Accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.

(Signed) Kéba Birane CISSÉ
Chairman of the Committee on the
Exercise of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People

His Excellency
Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali
Secretary-General of the United Nations

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was established by the General Assembly in its resolution 3376 (XXX) of 10 November 1975, in which the Assembly requested the Committee to consider and recommend to it a programme designed to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its inalienable rights as recognized by the Assembly in resolution 3236 (XXIX) of 22 November 1974. During the reporting period the Committee continued to be composed of 23 Member States, as follows: Afghanistan, Belarus, Cuba, Cyprus, Guinea, Guyana, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Nigeria, Pakistan, Romania, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Yugoslavia. 1/

2. The recommendations made by the Committee in its first report to the General Assembly 2/ were endorsed by the Assembly in its resolution 31/20 of 24 November 1976 as a basis for the solution of the question of Palestine. In its subsequent reports 3/ the Committee has continued to stress that a comprehensive, just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, must be based on the relevant United Nations resolutions and the following essential principles: the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and from the other occupied Arab territories; respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; and the recognition and exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, primarily the right to self-determination.

3. The Committee has welcomed the signing in September 1993 of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) (A/48/486-S/26560, annex) as well as the Gaza-Jericho Agreement of May 1994 (A/49/180-S/1994/727, annex) and other implementation agreements, as important steps towards the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the realization of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. The Committee has stated that it will continue to strengthen its efforts to promote the attainment of those rights and the full implementation of the Declaration of Principles and the subsequent agreements and to mobilize international assistance to the Palestinian people during the transitional period. Each year, the General Assembly has endorsed the Committee's recommendations with overwhelming support and has renewed its mandate and expanded it, as necessary.

4. During the year under review, the Committee noted with satisfaction that the peace process initiated at Madrid in October 1991 had continued despite many difficulties and that the parties had affirmed its irreversibility and their determination to maintain, sustain and continue that process. The Committee welcomed as an important further step in the process the signing, on 28 September 1995, in Washington, D.C., of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which supersedes the earlier implementing agreements and provides for the establishment of Palestinian interim self-government arrangements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Committee emphasized that the transitional period had reached a crucial stage, which required the full and effective implementation of the agreements reached, as well as confidence-building measures and in particular an end to the policy of settlements, land confiscation and closures, as well as an end to acts of violence aimed at jeopardizing the peace process. The Committee expressed the

hope that further progress would soon be achieved in the other negotiating tracks.

5. On 6 November 1995, the Bureau of the Committee condemned the assassination of the Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin, and expressed its hope that that criminal act would not have an adverse effect on the Middle East peace process to which Israel and the PLO had committed themselves.

6. The Committee affirmed once again the permanent responsibility of the United Nations with respect to the question of Palestine until it is resolved in all its aspects. It emphasized the need for the full engagement of the United Nations in the peace process and in the process of building the Palestinian self-government institutions, as well as in providing varied assistance to the Palestinian people in all needed fields.

7. Expressing concern at the continued deterioration of the Palestinian economy and the problems of poverty, unemployment and lack of adequate infrastructure faced by the Palestinian Authority, the Committee urged Member States to expedite the provision of economic, technical and development assistance to the Palestinian people in order to help build solid foundations for peace.

8. The Committee firmly believes that, as the organ of the General Assembly dealing with the question of Palestine, it can make a valuable and positive contribution to United Nations endeavours during the transitional period by continuing to promote dialogue and to educate and mobilize international opinion and action for the successful outcome of the agreements reached by the parties and in solidarity with the Palestinian people until a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement is achieved. The Committee intends to continue to devote a major part of its programme of work to that objective.

II. MANDATE OF THE COMMITTEE

9. The mandate of the Committee for the year 1995 is contained in paragraphs 2 to 6 of General Assembly resolution 49/62 A of 14 December 1994, in which the Assembly:

(a) Considered that the Committee could continue to make a valuable and positive contribution to international efforts to promote the effective implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and to mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people during the transitional period; and endorsed the recommendations of the Committee and requested it to continue to keep under review the situation relating to the question of Palestine and to report and make suggestions to the Assembly or the Security Council, as appropriate;

(b) Authorized the Committee to continue to exert all efforts to promote the exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, to make such adjustments in its approved programme of work as it might consider appropriate and necessary in the light of developments, to give special emphasis to the need to mobilize support and assistance for the Palestinian people, and to report thereon to the Assembly at its fiftieth session and thereafter;

(c) Also requested the Committee to continue to extend its cooperation to non-governmental organizations in their contribution towards heightening international awareness of the facts relating to the question of Palestine and promoting support and assistance to meet the needs of the Palestinian people, and to take the necessary steps to involve additional non-governmental organizations in its work.

10. In its resolution 49/62 B, also of 14 December 1994, the General Assembly considered that the Division for Palestinian Rights continued to make a useful and constructive contribution through the organization of seminars and meetings of non-governmental organizations, as well as through its research, monitoring and publication activities, and the collection and dissemination of information in printed and electronic form on all issues pertaining to the question of Palestine. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to provide the Division with the necessary resources, including the further development of the United Nations information system on the question of Palestine, and to ensure that it continued to discharge the tasks detailed in the pertinent resolutions of the Assembly, in consultation with the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and under its guidance.

11. In its resolution 49/62 C, of 14 December 1994, the General Assembly requested the Department of Public Information, in full cooperation and coordination with the Committee, to continue, with the necessary flexibility as may be required by developments affecting the question of Palestine, its special information programme on the question of Palestine for the biennium 1994-1995, with particular emphasis on public opinion in Europe and North America.

12. In carrying out its programme of work, the Committee also took into account General Assembly resolution 49/62 D, in which the Assembly reaffirmed the necessity of achieving a peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in all its aspects; expressed its full support for the ongoing peace process, which began at Madrid, and the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, as well as subsequent implementation agreements, and expressed the hope that the process

would lead to the establishment of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East; called for the timely and scrupulous implementation of the agreements reached between the parties towards the negotiation of the final settlement; urged Member States to expedite the provision of economic and technical assistance to the Palestinian people during this critical period; and emphasized the importance for the United Nations to play a more active and expanded role in the current peace process and in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles.

III. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. Election of officers

13. At its 212th meeting, on 3 February 1995, the Committee re-elected Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal) as Chairman, Mr. Ravan Farhadi (Afghanistan) as Vice-Chairman and Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta) as Rapporteur. At its 215th meeting, on 17 May 1995, the Committee elected Mr. Bruno Eduardo Rodriguez Parrilla (Cuba) as Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

14. At its 213th meeting, on 22 February 1995, the Committee adopted its programme of work for 1995 4/ in implementation of its mandate.

B. Participation in the work of the Committee

15. As in previous years, the Committee reconfirmed that all States Members and Permanent Observers to the United Nations desiring to participate in the work of the Committee as observers were welcome to do so. Accordingly, in a letter dated 13 April 1995, the Chairman of the Committee informed the Secretary-General, who subsequently transmitted the letter, on 18 April 1995, to the States Members of the United Nations and members of the specialized agencies, and to intergovernmental organizations. In accordance with established practice, the Committee also invited Palestine, represented by the PLO, to participate in the work of the Committee as an observer, to attend all its meetings and to make observations and proposals for consideration by the Committee.

16. In 1995, the Committee again welcomed as observers all the States and organizations that had participated in its work in the preceding year. 5/

C. Re-establishment of the Working Group

17. At its 212th meeting, the Committee re-established its Working Group in order to assist in the preparation and expedition of the work of the Committee on the understanding that any Committee member or observer could participate in its deliberations. 6/ The Working Group was constituted as before under the chairmanship of Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta) and Mr. Sujan R. Chinoy (India) as Vice-Chairman.

IV. REVIEW OF THE SITUATION RELATING TO THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE

18. In accordance with its mandate, the Committee continued to keep under review the developments relating to the question of Palestine and to exert all efforts to promote the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights. The Committee also continued to contribute to international efforts to promote the effective implementation of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and to mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people.

19. The Committee was encouraged that during the previous year the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations had proceeded despite repeated delays and acts of violence, which had taken many innocent victims on both sides and aroused the concern and condemnation of the international community. On 27 August 1995, the parties signed, at Cairo, the Protocol on Further Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities. In a breakthrough, on 28 September 1995, the parties signed, in Washington, D.C., the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which supersedes all earlier agreements in implementation of the Declaration of Principles. The Agreement reaffirms the parties' understanding that the interim self-government arrangements provided therein are an integral part of the whole peace process and that the negotiations on the permanent status, which will start no later than 4 May 1996, will lead to the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The Agreement provides for the dissolution of the Civil Administration, the withdrawal of the Israeli military government and a scheduled transfer of powers and responsibilities to the Palestinian Interim Self-Governing Authority. The Palestinian Interim Self-Governing Agreement, which will replace the Palestinian Authority established under the Gaza-Jericho Agreement, will be composed of an 82-member Council and the Head (Ra'ees) of its Executive Authority, both elected for a transitional period until May 1999 at the latest. The Agreement further contains modalities for participation in the elections by the Palestinian people of the West Bank, Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip; and makes provision for international observation of the election process.

20. The Agreement further provides for a timetable for redeployment of Israeli military forces, firstly from six cities (Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarm, Kalkiliya, Ramallah and Bethlehem) and from 450 towns, villages, refugee camps and hamlets, to be completed prior to the holding of elections. Redeployment of the Israeli military forces will also take place in Hebron, with special security arrangements, including a temporary international presence. The Agreement provides for a gradual assumption of civil powers and responsibilities by the Palestinian Council. Further Israeli military redeployments are to take place at 6-month intervals (for a period of 18 months) following the Council's inauguration, with concomitant extensions of the territorial jurisdiction of the Council except for areas subject to final status negotiations. The Agreement further sets out arrangements for the transfer of agreed upon civil powers and responsibilities from the Israeli Civil Administration to the Council; the establishment of a Palestinian Police Force; and other provisions regarding legal matters, religious sites, human rights, water, a phased release of Palestinian detainees and prisoners, and cooperation in the areas of environment, economics, technology and science, and in fostering dialogue and mutual understanding.

21. The Committee considered that the new Agreement provided an opportunity for the Palestinian people to build on the achievements of the past year and to

proceed further in the construction of its State. It was pleased to note that, with the assistance and support of the international community and through the committed efforts of the Palestinian population, the Palestinian Authority had gradually established its administration and had taken a number of measures to ensure public order and to normalize Palestinian political, social, economic and cultural life, as well as to improve living conditions. The Committee noted that a number of countries had established relations with the Authority and recognized the Palestinian passports, and urged other States to do so as soon as possible.

22. Despite these positive developments, the Committee noted that the situation in the areas still under Israeli occupation gave reason for concern and continued to create facts on the ground that had potential negative effects for the future exercise of Palestinian rights and for the peace process itself. Of utmost importance was the issue of land confiscation and settlements, including in East Jerusalem. The Committee noted, in particular, plans for the construction of additional settler housing as well as for the construction of roads linking settlements and leading to the fragmentation of the West Bank and the isolation of East Jerusalem. These developments were discussed twice by the Security Council, first in February and then in May 1995 (see paras. 30-40 below). In that regard, the Committee took note of the positive decision by Israel, in May 1995, to suspend the planned confiscation of Palestinian land in East Jerusalem. The Committee reaffirmed that the settlement policy was in contradiction with Israel's obligations as the occupying Power under the Fourth Geneva Convention and called on the Government to end that policy once and for all.

23. The Committee also noted with concern that the presence of large numbers of armed Israeli settlers in the immediate vicinity of densely populated Palestinian areas generated tension often resulting in acts of violence. The situation remained particularly tense and volatile in Hebron. The campaign launched by the settlers in opposition to the new agreements added to the sense of insecurity and lack of protection felt by Palestinians living near the settlements and was also a cause for concern.

24. During the year under review, the Committee expressed profound concern at the repeated closures, for security reasons, of the occupied territory and the self-rule areas and at the isolation of East Jerusalem. The closures had a devastating effect on the overall livelihood of the Palestinian population in an economy much intertwined with that of Israel, as well as on Palestinian education and health. They also affected trade between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, in particular in agricultural products, a major source of income for thousands of Palestinian households.

25. The Committee was also concerned that thousands of Palestinian prisoners and detainees remained in Israeli prisons, under conditions that had been repeatedly decried by human rights organizations. It called on Israel to implement the planned releases speedily and to work to ameliorate conditions of detention.

26. The Committee paid particular attention to issues related to Palestinian socio-economic development and reconstruction during the transitional period. The Committee took note of the continued multilateral effort, which culminated in the Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit, held at Casablanca, Morocco, from 30 October to 1 November 1994, and the adoption of the Declaration of Casablanca (A/49/645, annex). The conference became an important first step towards integrating the Palestinian economy into a wider regional economic

framework. The Committee is of the view that promoting and fostering Palestinian economic development is particularly crucial as a dynamic economy and prosperity are important underpinnings of peace and stability in the region. These ideas were reaffirmed in a joint communiqué issued on 12 February 1995 at Blair House, Washington, D.C., by the United States of America, Egypt, Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority. The Committee welcomed the convening of the Second Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit, held at Amman from 29 to 31 October 1995, which will facilitate the expansion of investment in the region and enhance regional cooperation and development, thereby promoting stability and an atmosphere conducive to peace.

27. The Committee voiced its concern at the continued deterioration of the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and, in particular, the Gaza Strip. It stressed that the destruction of the Palestinian economic infrastructure as a result of the prolonged occupation required the urgent attention of the international community. In that regard, the Committee noted with satisfaction that a coordination mechanism for international assistance had been established and a plan of action elaborated. The Committee called on the international donor community to provide and increase assistance as a matter of high priority and urgency. The Committee noted with appreciation the contribution of funds by donor countries and the European Union (EU) to the Palestinian Police as well as to various needed development projects.

28. The Committee took note of the diversified assistance to the Palestinian people provided by the organizations, agencies and programmes of the United Nations system. Over the year, there has been a significant increase in United Nations involvement in assistance projects and programmes for the Palestinians. The Committee expressed appreciation for the efforts aimed at mobilizing and coordinating such assistance made at this critical stage by the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories. It continued to give priority to promoting international assistance to the Palestinian people in order to meet their socio-economic and development needs and to support the Palestinian Authority in its institution-building efforts. The Committee structured its programme of regional meetings so as to contribute to the debate on relevant issues. To that end, it convened at UNESCO headquarters, Paris, in June 1995, a seminar dealing with Palestinian administrative, managerial and financial needs and challenges (see below, paras. 62-67).

V. ACTION TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE

A. Action taken in accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/62 A

1. Reaction to developments affecting the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people

(a) Communication to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

29. In a letter dated 17 January 1995 (A/49/831-S/1995/50), the Chairman of the Committee drew the attention of the Secretary-General and of the President of the Security Council to the expansion and consolidation by the Government of Israel of settlements in the occupied territory.

(b) Action taken within the Security Council

30. At the request of the Permanent Representative of Djibouti, in his capacity as Chairman of the Arab Group of States for the month of February 1995, 7/ an urgent meeting of the Security Council was held on 28 February 1995 to consider the question of the establishment of Israeli settlements in the territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and the dangerous consequences of those activities on the Palestinian people and on the Middle East peace process.

31. The Chairman of the Committee participated in the debate on this issue on 28 February 1995 in the Security Council. In his statement on behalf of the Committee, 8/ he stated that Israel, the occupying Power, continued to implement the unlawful policy of establishing settlements in occupied Palestinian territory and authorized more and more Israeli settlers to move into them, in the most direct and serious contravention of article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, and also in violation of Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 446 (1979), 452 (1979) and 465 (1980).

32. Land confiscation and settlement expansion were taking place, in particular in and around the occupied city of East Jerusalem. Since September 1994, several announcements by high-level Israeli officials had indicated a toughening of Israel's position on this key issue and Israeli policies in this regard had caused serious friction.

33. The Chairman noted that the Israeli decision came at a time when the implementation of the second stage of the 13 September 1993 Declaration of Principles had been delayed for seven months, including the redeployment of the Israeli forces away from populated areas in the West Bank and the election of the Palestinian Council. Clearly, the decision further undermined the current peace process and exacerbated the already fragile, tense and dangerous atmosphere in the occupied territory.

34. The Security Council concluded its general debate without adopting any specific measures with respect to the item under consideration on 28 February 1995.

35. In a letter dated 8 May 1995 from the Permanent Representatives of Morocco and the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations, 9/ and also a letter dated 8 May 1995 from the Permanent Representative of Morocco in his capacity as

Chairman of the Islamic Group for the month of May 1995, 10/ an urgent meeting of the Security Council was requested to discuss the situation in the occupied Arab territories, as well as to take the necessary measures for revocation of the Israeli confiscation orders in respect of Palestinian land situated in the area of East Jerusalem. The Council met between 12 and 17 May 1995.

36. The Acting Chairman of the Committee took part in the debate and stated that the main issue at stake was Israel's continued illegal construction and expansion of settlements on Palestinian land and its allowing more Israeli settlers to move there, which is a direct and serious violation of international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention and the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions.

37. This action by Israel also flagrantly violated the spirit and the letter of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements signed on 13 September 1993 by the Government of Israel and the PLO.

38. The Acting Chairman stated that in the Declaration of Principles it was agreed that negotiations on the final status of Jerusalem and on other issues would begin not later than the third year of the interim period. The recent decision by the Government of Israel to confiscate Palestinian land in East Jerusalem seriously undermined the peace process at a time when the implementation of the second stage of the Declaration of Principles had been deferred.

39. The Committee considered that the confiscation of land in East Jerusalem and the increasing expansion and consolidation of settlements created a de facto situation inconsistent with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which the current peace process sought to implement, and seriously compromised the agreements between Israel and the PLO.

40. At the 3538th meeting of the Security Council, a draft resolution calling upon the Government of Israel to rescind the expropriation orders and to refrain from such actions in the future, and expressing its full support for the Middle East peace process and its achievements, including the Declaration of Principles, as well as the subsequent implementation agreements, 11/ was not adopted owing to the negative vote of a permanent member of the Security Council.

2. Attendance at international conferences and meetings

41. In accordance with its mandate, the Committee was represented by its Chairman at the following international meetings during the period since its previous report to the General Assembly:

(a) Twenty-second Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers and Seventh Islamic Summit Conference, held at Casablanca, Morocco, from 10 to 11 and from 13 to 15 December 1994, respectively;

(b) International Seminar on the City of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, convened by the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the League of Arab States (LAS) at Cairo from 12 to 14 March 1995;

(c) Commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the Asia-Africa Conference, 24 April 1995, and Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of

the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Bandung, Indonesia, from 25 to 27 April 1995;

(d) Eleventh Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Countries, held at Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, from 14 to 20 October 1995.

3. Action taken by United Nations bodies, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and intergovernmental organizations

42. The Committee continued to follow with great interest the activities relating to the question of Palestine of United Nations bodies, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and intergovernmental organizations. The Committee noted in particular the support of the international community for the ongoing peace process, as well as the Declaration of Principles and the subsequent implementation agreements, as important steps leading towards a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement in accordance with United Nations resolutions. The Committee also expressed continued concern at the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, and noted the sense of urgency with which the international community addressed the need to provide assistance to the Palestinian people in the difficult transition period. The Committee took particular note of the following documents:

(a) Statement issued by EU on aid to the Palestinian people on 28 November 1994 (A/49/751, annex);

(b) Declaration and resolutions adopted by the Seventh Islamic Summit Conference of OIC held at Casablanca, Morocco, from 13 to 15 December 1994 (A/50/85-S/1995/152, annexes II-VII);

(c) Excerpts from the final report adopted by the Fifteenth Session of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council, held at Manamah, Bahrain, from 19 to 21 December 1994 (A/49/815-S/1994/1446, annex);

(d) Resolution 5451 adopted by LAS at a special session on 5 January 1995, concerning settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and other Arab territories (A/49/823-S/1995/11, annex);

(e) Final communiqué and recommendations of the fifteenth session of the Al-Quds Committee of OIC, held at Ifrane, Morocco, on 16 and 17 January 1995 (A/50/82-S/1995/135, annex);

(f) Resolutions 1995/1 to 1995/6, on the question of Palestine, adopted by the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-first session, held at Geneva from 30 January to 10 March 1995;

(g) Appeal by the World Health Organization (WHO) for the Palestinian health sector launched on 28 February 1995; 12/

(h) Resolution 39/3, on the integration of women in the Middle East peace process, adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at its thirty-ninth session, held in New York from 15 March to 7 April 1995;

(i) Final communiqué of the International Seminar on the City of Al-Quds Al-Sharif, convened by OIC and LAS at Cairo from 12 to 14 March 1995;

(j) Communiqué adopted at the fifty-fourth session of the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council, held at Riyadh on 19 and 20 March 1995 (A/50/123-S/1995/228, annex);

(k) Communiqué adopted at the Ministerial Meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, held at Bandung, Indonesia, from 25 to 27 April 1995 (A/49/920-S/1995/489, annex I);

(l) Press release issued by the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council at its fifty-fifth session, held at Riyadh on 10 and 11 June 1995 (A/50/255-S/1995/504, annex);

(m) Statement adopted at the summit meeting of seven major industrialized countries, held at Halifax, Canada, from 15 to 17 June 1995 (A/50/254-S/1995/501, annex II);

(n) Resolutions CM/Res.1590 (LXII) and CM/Res.1591 (LXII), on the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East, adopted by the Council of Ministers of OAU at its sixty-second session, held at Addis Ababa from 21 to 23 June 1995;

(o) Resolutions 1995/45 and 1995/52, adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session, held from 26 June to 28 July 1995;

(p) Communiqué issued by the Ministerial Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council at its fifty-sixth session, held at Riyadh on 18 and 19 September 1995 (A/50/466-S/1995/817, annex);

(q) Final document adopted by the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Countries, held at Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, from 14 to 20 October 1995.

B. Action taken by the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 49/62 A and B

43. In its programme of work for the year 1995, the Committee decided to continue organizing regional seminars and meetings of non-governmental organizations and sponsoring the preparation of studies and publications in accordance with existing mandates and budgetary provisions. The Committee, as in the past, decided to invite Palestinian and Israeli personalities to participate in all events organized under its auspices with a view to promoting a constructive debate, mutual understanding and a concrete and action-oriented analysis of the most important issues relating to the question of Palestine, the transition period and the peace process.

44. The Committee considered that the following priority tasks required immediate and sustained attention in its programme of work for 1995:

(a) Promoting support for the ongoing peace process and for the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements and subsequent implementation agreements, and following closely the developments and monitoring the situation on the ground, in order to promote the effective implementation of the agreements reached and the full realization of Palestinian rights;

(b) The mobilization and promotion of international assistance to the Palestinian people by the United Nations system as a whole, as well as by other donors, for immediate relief and for nation-building;

(c) Encouraging constructive consideration and debate of the major issues to be negotiated at a later stage with a view to promoting a final settlement based on international legitimacy in accordance with Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and other relevant United Nations resolutions.

1. Seminars

45. In the programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995, provision was made for the organization of regional seminars in Latin America and the Caribbean, Europe, North America, Asia and Africa in 1995. In establishing its programme of work for the year, the Committee decided not to hold the North American seminar and to devote some of the resulting savings to the North American non-governmental organization symposium. It also decided to devote the resources earmarked for a European seminar to a seminar on Palestinian administrative, managerial and financial needs and challenges. The Committee also initiated consultations with regard to identifying a venue for the holding of an Asian seminar and non-governmental organization symposium. This event and an event in Africa could not be held during the year under review, however.

(a) Latin American and Caribbean Regional Seminar

46. The Latin American and Caribbean Regional Seminar was held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 23 March 1995, jointly with the Latin American and Caribbean NGO Symposium. The Committee greatly appreciated the decision of the Government of Brazil to provide the venue for the Seminar and Symposium.

47. The Committee was represented by a delegation comprising Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee and head of delegation, who acted as Chairman of the meeting; Mr. İnal Batu (Turkey) and Mr. Anatoli Maximovich Zlenko (Ukraine), who acted as Vice-Chairmen; Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee, who acted as Rapporteur of the meeting; and Mr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa (Palestine).

48. The Seminar and NGO Symposium were attended by 17 panellists from Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as Palestinians and Israelis, representatives of 17 Governments, 3 United Nations organs and intergovernmental organizations and 16 non-governmental organizations. A number of media representatives and faculty and students of universities and institutes also participated in the meeting.

49. At the opening session, Mr. Adhemar Gabriel Bahadian, Chief of Staff of the Acting Minister for External Relations of Brazil, made a statement. A message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations was read by his representative, Mrs. Laura Reanda, Chief of the Division for Palestinian Rights. A statement was made by Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Mr. Musa Oudeh, Special Envoy of Palestine, read a message from Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO.

50. The theme of the Seminar and Symposium was "Supporting the Peace Process - The Contribution of Latin America and the Caribbean".

51. Three panels were organized. The topics addressed and the panellists were as follows:

Panel I. New developments since the signing of the Declaration of Principles

Mr. Nabil Amr, Member of the Central Council of the PLO, Editor of Al-Hayat Al-Jadidah

Mr. Ran Cohen, Member of the Knesset, Chairperson of the Meretz faction

Mr. Hanna Safieh, Professor at Federal University, Natal, Brazil, Member of the Palestine National Council

Mr. Uri Avnery, Israeli journalist, writer, peace activist

Statement by Mr. Saeb Erakat, Member of the Palestinian Authority (read by Mr. Ibrahim Al Zeben, Chargé d'affaires a.i., Delegation of Palestine to Brazil)

Panel II. The Palestinian self-government - challenges and prospects for nation-building

Mr. Sari Nusseibeh, Member of the Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction, Chairperson, Palestine Consultancy Group

Mr. Luis Mesa Delmonte, Director, Centre for Africa and Middle East Studies, Cuba

Mr. Ivan Moreira, Member of the Chilean Parliament

Panel III. New opportunities for action by Latin American and Caribbean countries and organizations

(a) Economic assistance and cooperation: the new environment for Governments and private groups

Mr. Pedro Paulo Pinto Assumpção, Ambassador, Head, Middle East Department, Ministry of External Relations, Brazil

Mr. Gustavo Marcelo Marquez, businessman, Member of the Argentino-Arab Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Jaber Omar, Professor of Economics, University of Pelotas, Brazil

(b) Cooperation of non-governmental organizations with their Palestinian counterparts

Mr. Hussein Abdelkhalek, Representative of Palestine in Chile

Mr. Carlos Etchegoyhen, medical doctor and psychoanalyst, Uruguay, visiting scholar at the University of North Dakota

Mr. José Félix Ferreyra, Chairman, NGO Coordinating Committee for Latin America and the Caribbean, Argentina

(c) The contribution of diaspora Palestinians

Mr. José Elias, President, Federation of Palestinian Organizations in Chile; President, University of San Andrés, Chile

Mr. Juan Abugattas, Professor of Philosophy, University of San Marcos, Peru

Ms. Tilda Rabi, President, Federation of Palestinian Organizations in Argentina

(d) Culture and the media: new possibilities for cooperation

Mr. Juan José Salinas, journalist with the TELAM news agency, Argentina

52. In the conclusions and recommendations adopted by the Seminar and NGO Symposium, the participants welcomed the positive developments in the Middle East peace process and the agreements reached between Israel and the PLO since September 1993, as well as the consequent developments. They considered that the Declaration of Principles was a historical breakthrough that had required great courage by the parties concerned and that with perseverance and the strong support of the international community as a whole a just and lasting peace could be achieved. It was noted that the Latin American and Caribbean countries had a significant contribution to make in that regard.

53. Participants expressed great concern, however, at the repeated delays in the implementation of the agreements reached, which generated insecurity and could disrupt the peace process. They called on the Government of Israel to cease all settlement construction and expansion activities and land confiscation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, to end the closure of the territory, to release all Palestinian prisoners and to move quickly towards the prompt implementation of the second phase of the Declaration of Principles, including the redeployment in the rest of the West Bank and Palestinian elections. The Government of Israel was also called upon to respect fully its obligations as the occupying Power under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

54. Condemnation was expressed of all acts of violence, of whatever form or whatever source, aimed at derailing the peace process, which had resulted in many casualties among both Palestinians and Israelis.

55. The meeting was apprised of the great challenges posed by the gradual transfer of responsibilities to the Palestinian Authority, aggravated by the present political and economic difficulties. It was stressed that international support for the Palestinian people and its leadership in all fields - political, economic and social - was of paramount importance for the attainment of peace in the region.

56. Participants appealed to the donor countries and the World Bank to accelerate the delivery of the aid promised as an essential stimulus for development and an ideal means of promoting peace. They commended the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, and welcomed the decision by the Secretary-General to transfer the headquarters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) from Vienna to Gaza.

57. Participants encouraged those Governments in Latin America which had not yet done so to establish official relations with the PLO and to extend

diplomatic recognition to its offices in their countries in order to streamline and facilitate the desired cooperation.

58. Participants suggested that the traditionally harmonious relations between the Palestinian and Jewish communities in Latin America could provide the foundation for joint activities aimed at improving mutual understanding and tackling difficult issues in a spirit of cooperation. They recommended that meetings of representatives of the two communities in Latin America and their non-governmental organizations be organized to consider common concerns, including sensitive issues such as the Palestinian right of return, and requested the Committee to consider organizing such a meeting.

59. Non-governmental organizations in the Latin American and Caribbean region were called upon to define action strategies responsive to Palestinian needs and to use their positive influence on Governments in that regard. It was recommended that direct links be forged between the Palestinian Authority and Latin American and Caribbean organizations in all fields of non-governmental organization competence, and that non-governmental organizations assist their Palestinian counterparts in their efforts to build a civil society.

60. Non-governmental organizations were called upon to disseminate reliable information on the realities of the Palestinian people and the status of the peace process, including through the Internet and through the establishment of a Latin American segment of a possible Middle East news agency, which should include participation by Palestinian and Israeli journalists.

61. The report of this event has been issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat.

(b) Seminar on Palestinian Administrative, Managerial and Financial Needs and Challenges

62. The Seminar was held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris from 28 to 30 June 1995. The Committee expressed its appreciation to the Director-General of UNESCO for the facilities put at its disposal and for his cooperation in the holding of the Seminar.

63. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People was represented by a delegation consisting of Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), Chairman; Mr. Ravan A. G. Farhadi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman; Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta), Rapporteur; Mr. Alimamy Bangura (Sierra Leone); and Mr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa (Palestine). The officers of the Committee served as officers of the Seminar in their respective capacities.

64. The Seminar was attended by 20 panellists and by representatives of 50 Governments, 9 United Nations organs and 4 intergovernmental organizations.

65. The programme for the seminar began with a plenary session on "Palestinian administrative, managerial and financial needs and challenges". Statements were made by donor countries and other Governments, intergovernmental organizations and United Nations departments, bodies and agencies.

66. Subsequently, four round-table discussions, moderated by experts, were conducted as follows:

(a) The Palestinian Authority - needs and challenges of administration: the needs of the public sector for reconstruction and development; enhancing the Palestinian Authority's institutional capability; building a legal framework; organization of the administration at the central and local levels; mobilizing resources effectively

Mr. Shibley Telhami, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C. (Moderator)

Mr. Ibrahim Al Daghma, Chief, Legal Advice and Legislation Department, Palestinian Authority

Mr. Samir Huleileh, Palestinian Economic Council for Development and Reconstruction

Mr. Yair Hirschfeld, Director-General, Economic Cooperation Foundation; Senior Lecturer, University of Haifa

Mr. Alfons Calderon Riera, Assistant Professor, Escuela Superior de Administración y Dirección de Empresas, Barcelona

Mr. Amin Baidoun, Director-General for International Cooperation, Palestinian Authority

(b) Laying the foundation for a public financial management: building budgeting, accounting and auditing; developing an efficient internal revenue system; building public financial investment system; building a social security system; and establishing conditions for transparency and accountability

Mr. Stephen B. Peterson, Research Associate, Harvard Institute for International Development, Harvard University (Moderator)

Mr. Fouad H. Beseiso, Head, Palestinian Monetary Authority

Mr. Atef Alawneh, Deputy Head, Finance Department, Palestinian Authority

Ms. Muna H. Jawhary, economist-consultant, London/Jerusalem

Mr. Georges Capdeboscq, Counsellor, French National Audit Court, Paris

Mr. Gilles Johanet, Counsellor, French National Audit Court, Paris

Mr. Abdel Hamid Bouab, Officer-in-Charge, Public Finance and Enterprise Management Branch, Department for Development Support and Management Services, United Nations

(c) Supporting the development of the Palestinian municipalities and public utilities: Improving public services and infrastructure: health, education, communication, energy, water, public transport; improving conditions for public service delivery

Mr. Francis Dubois (Moderator)

Mr. Mustafa Abdel Nabi Natshe, Mayor of Hebron

Mr. Ghassan El-Shakah, Mayor of Nablus

Mr. Hussein Al-A'raj, Deputy Head, Local Government Department, Palestinian Authority

Mr. Sameer A. Abu-Eisheh, Dean, Faculty of Engineering, Al-Najah University, Nablus

(d) Human resources development and management - building institutional capacity: building public personnel system and structures (including the legal framework for public service); enhancing training capacities for all levels of administration; Promoting participation of women at all management levels

Mr. Robin Poppe, Programme Officer, National Capacity Building, ILO International Training Centre, Turin (Moderator)

Mr. Shibley Telhami, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C.

Mr. Bishara A. Bahbah, Associate Director, Institute for Social and Economic Policy in the Middle East, Harvard University

Mr. Musa D. Ghosheh, Head, Employee's Bureau, West Bank

Mr. Alain Claisse, Professor of Public Law, University of Paris

Mr. George Jadoun, Technical Programme Manager, Training Focal Point for Palestine, ILO International Training Centre, Turin

67. Participants in the seminar engaged in an analysis and discussion of the recent developments and the prospects for peace in the area, as well as of the current economic situation and the imperative necessity of its rapid amelioration in order to provide a solid foundation for peace efforts. The experts gave a serious analysis of current and future needs in the fields concerned and constructive proposals were made to meet the current situation and to promote sustainable development of the Palestinian economy during and after the transitional period. The final report of the Seminar was submitted to the President of the Economic and Social Council in a letter from the Chairman of the Committee for circulation to the members of the Council (A/50/278-E/1995/114). It will also be issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

2. Cooperation with non-governmental organizations

68. The Committee, in accordance with its mandate under General Assembly resolution 49/62 A, continued to cooperate and expand contacts with interested non-governmental organizations in all regions. During 1995, a Latin American and Caribbean NGO symposium was held jointly with the seminar, as well as an NGO Symposium for the North American region and a combined meeting for European and international non-governmental organizations. The Committee noted that non-governmental organizations had continued their efforts to provide assistance and support to the Palestinian people in view of the new situation following the Declaration of Principles and subsequent implementation agreements. The Committee affirmed the importance of the contribution by the non-governmental organizations to the international efforts on behalf of the Palestinian people and considered that their support would continue to be essential during the transitional period.

(a) Latin American and Caribbean Regional NGO Symposium

69. The Latin American and Caribbean NGO Symposium on the question of Palestine was held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 23 March 1995, together with the Seminar (see paras. 46-61), and shared with it the main theme "Supporting the peace process - the contribution of Latin America and the Caribbean", the round-table discussions and the adoption of the final document.

70. In addition, two workshops were held specifically for non-governmental organizations on the following topics: "Mobilization of and networking by non-governmental organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean to promote assistance to the Palestinian people" and "Non-governmental organization activities to mobilize public opinion for a just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine - review of actions taken since the first Latin American and Caribbean Symposium in 1990 and future activities". The Committee noted that the participating non-governmental organizations had taken steps to strengthen their regional coordination and had elected a new coordinating committee.

(b) North American Regional NGO Symposium

71. The twelfth United Nations North American NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine was held at New York from 19 to 21 June 1995 in cooperation with the North American Coordinating Committee for Non-Governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine and in accordance with the programme elaborated at the preparatory meeting for the United Nations International NGO Meeting/European NGO Symposium and the North American NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine, held at New York on 27 and 28 February 1995.

72. The Committee was represented by a delegation consisting of Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee and head of delegation; Mr. Bruno E. Rodriguez Parrilla (Cuba) and Mr. Ravan Farhadi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairmen of the Committee; Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee; and Mr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa (Palestine).

73. The Symposium was attended by representatives of 73 non-governmental organizations, 23 of them as observers, 18 panellists and workshop leaders, 11 Governments and 2 intergovernmental organizations.

74. The theme of the Symposium was "The United Nations on its fiftieth anniversary and the question of Palestine". The panel topics and experts taking part in the plenary sessions were as follows:

(a) Challenges to peace: obstacles and opportunities

(i) Jerusalem and settlements: Rev. Alex Awad, Lecturer, Bethlehem Bible College, and Pastor, East Jerusalem Baptist Church

Mr. Michael Warshawski, founder and Director, Alternative Information Center, Jerusalem

(ii) The situation of the refugees

Ms. Leila Zachariah, Executive Director, Najdeh Association, Beirut

(iii) Securing respect for international humanitarian law

Mr. Avigdor Feldman, Lawyer, human rights activist and one of the founders of B'tselem;

(b) Working towards self-determination, promoting civil society

(i) Building civil society

Mr. Raja Sourani, lawyer and human rights activist

(ii) Advancing women's concerns

Ms. Suha Hindiyeh-Mani, Director and one of the founders of the Women's Studies Center, East Jerusalem

(iii) Promoting social development

Mr. Shafiq Masalha, clinical psychologist and Acting Director, Palestinian Counselling Center, East Jerusalem

(c) Continuing commitment of non-governmental organizations on the question of Palestine

Dr. Haider Abdel Shafi, President, Red Crescent Society

Mr. Larry Ekin, Chairman, North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine

Ms. Maria Gazi, Vice-Chairman, European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine

75. The workshops addressed the following topics: refugees and the displaced; settlements; the status of Jerusalem; securing respect for international humanitarian law; Palestinian women mobilize; promoting civil society; development: putting people first; and labour in transition.

76. The Symposium held successful debates and discussions and offered an opportunity for the non-governmental organizations in North America to coordinate their endeavours and activities in order to assist the Palestinian people in various fields. The participating non-governmental organizations elected a new coordinating committee for the North American region to follow up on the decisions that were taken and to assure future cooperation with the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights. The report of the Symposium will be issued as a publication of the Division.

(c) European NGO Symposium and International NGO Meeting on the Question of Palestine

77. The twelfth United Nations International NGO Meeting and Ninth European NGO Symposium on the Question of Palestine were held as a combined event at the Vienna International Centre from 29 August to 1 September 1995.

78. The meeting was attended by 26 panellists and workshop leaders, and by the representatives of 51 non-governmental organizations, 21 of them as observers. It was also attended by representatives of 37 Governments, 10 United Nations

agencies and bodies, 3 intergovernmental organizations and 5 non-governmental organization coordinating committees and a delegation from Palestine.

79. The Committee was represented by a delegation composed of Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee and head of delegation; Mr. Ravan A. G. Farhadi (Afghanistan), Vice-Chairman; Mr. Joseph Cassar (Malta), Rapporteur of the Committee; Mr. Alyaksandr Sychou (Belarus); and Mr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa (Palestine).

80. The programme for the meeting was formulated by the Committee in consultation with the members of the International Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ICCP) and of the European Coordinating Committee for NGOs on the Question of Palestine (ECCP) at a preparatory meeting held in New York on 27 and 28 February 1995. The central theme of the combined meeting was "The fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations – Palestine, non-governmental organizations and the implementation of United Nations resolutions".

81. At the opening session, participants were welcomed on behalf of the Government of Austria by Mr. Wolfgang Schallenberg, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A message from Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Secretary-General of the United Nations, was delivered by his representative, Mr. Giorgio Giacomelli, Under-Secretary-General and Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna. Mr. Cissé spoke in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Mr. Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the PLO and Chairman of the Palestinian Authority, conveyed a message through his representative, Mr. Mohieddin Massoud. Statements were also made by Mr. Don Betz, Chairman of ICCP, and Ms. Maria Gazi, Vice-Chairman of ECCP.

82. The invited experts made presentations in five panels, which were followed by discussions. In the first panel, entitled "The United Nations at its fiftieth anniversary and the question of Palestine", presentations were made by Mr. Ilter Turkmen, Commissioner-General of UNRWA, and Mr. M. Nasser Al-Kidwa, Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations.

83. The second panel was entitled "The present political situation". Presentations were made by Mr. Victor Possouvaliouk, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation; Mr. Azimi Shuibi, Minister of Sports and Youth, Palestinian Authority; Mr. Abdulwahab Darawshe, Chairman of the Arab Democratic Party, Member of the Knesset; Mr. Haim Baram, journalist and founding member of the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace; and Mr. Taysir Arouri, Professor of Physics and Mathematics, Bir Zeit University, and member of the Palestine National Council.

84. In the third panel, entitled "Elements of the final peace settlement, and obstacles to peace", presentations on various sub-topics were made as follows: Mr. Ibrahim Matar, Deputy Director, American Near East Refugee Aid (ANERA), spoke on the issue of Jerusalem and settlements; Mr. Elia Zureik, Professor of Sociology at Queen's College, Ontario, Canada, and a member of the Palestinian delegation to the refugee working group of the multilateral peace talks, and Mr. Zakaria Abderahim, Director-General, Department for Returnee's Affairs, PLO, made presentations on the issues of refugees and the right of return; and Mr. Hashem Mahameed, Head of the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality and Member of the Knesset, addressed the topic of Israel's violations of its commitments under the Declaration of Principles.

85. The fourth panel, entitled "Palestine update", consisted of briefings on social issues and living conditions facing the Palestinians on the ground. Mr. Taysir Arouri spoke on economic and social development issues. Dr. Imad Tarawiyeh, Ministry of Health, Palestinian Authority, addressed health-related questions. A presentation on education and children was made by Mr. George B. Sahhar, Director of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Education, Palestinian Authority. Ms. Eileen Kuttab, Lecturer in Sociology and Anthropology and Coordinator, Women's Studies Programme, Bir Zeit University, spoke on women's issues.

86. The fifth panel considered the issue of "Building the NGO network - NGO strategies for action". Presentations in this regard were made by Mr. Fathi Darwish, Director in the Ministry of International Cooperation and Planning, Palestinian Authority; Ms. Emma Murphy, Lecturer in Middle Eastern Politics, University of Durham, United Kingdom; Mr. José Elias, Chairman, Federation of Palestinian Organizations in Chile, President, University of San Andrés; Mr. John Gee, Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding; Mr. Don Betz, Chairman of ICCP; Ms. Maria Gazi, Vice-Chairman of ECCP; and Mr. Larry Ekin, Chairman of the North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs.

87. In addition to the panels, a number of workshops were held concurrently for participants interested in developing specific action-oriented proposals. The workshop topics were linked to those addressed in the panels. A demonstration in electronic skills was also organized.

88. Participating non-governmental organizations adopted a communiqué in which they welcomed the positive developments in the Middle East peace process as a result of the historic Declaration of Principles. They also noted with great concern the repeated delays in the implementation of the letter and spirit of the agreement, which posed a threat to the achievement of a just and lasting peace, and exhorted Israel to honour its commitments in a timely manner. They also reaffirmed that Israel, as the occupying Power, remained obligated to observe the Fourth Geneva Convention until the Palestinian people achieved full sovereignty.

89. The communiqué further stated that support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people in accordance with United Nations resolutions remained at the centre of non-governmental organization commitment. The Committee was called upon to convene a non-governmental organization meeting in Jerusalem or another location in the region in order to demonstrate solidarity with Palestinians on the ground.

90. Non-governmental organizations reaffirmed the fundamental importance of questions related to Jerusalem, settlements and the right of return for the attainment of a just and lasting peace. They expressed their opposition to Israeli actions designed to predetermine the final outcome of the talks, and called for concerted efforts by non-governmental organizations to publicize violations of Palestinian human rights and to lobby Governments regarding those concerns. Particular mention was made, in that regard, of the ongoing incarceration of political prisoners; the closure and intimidation of Palestinian institutions; the restrictions imposed on international and Palestinian non-governmental organizations aimed at disrupting their work; and the repeated closure of East Jerusalem. Israel was also urged to assure safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank for goods and people.

91. Further, the communiqué called on countries hosting Palestinian refugees to preserve and observe their rights, and called for greater non-governmental

organization action on behalf of refugees, including by Palestinian grass-roots organizations.

92. Praising the efforts of local Palestinian non-governmental organizations, the communiqué stated that their strengthening would ensure the development of civil society and called for cooperation with the Palestinian Authority and for greater involvement of international non-governmental organizations. It also called for greater cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli non-governmental organizations.

93. Finally, the communiqué stressed the need to continue to develop the relationship of the non-governmental organization coordinating committees with the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in order to achieve maximum effectiveness in assisting the Palestinian people.

94. The report of the meeting will be issued as a publication of the Division for Palestinian Rights.

3. Research, monitoring and publications

95. The Committee emphasized the essential contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights as a centre for research, monitoring, the preparation of studies and the collection and dissemination of information on all issues related to the question of Palestine, and requested the Division to continue its programme of publications, in consultation with the Committee.

96. The Committee considered that the studies, bulletins, information notes, reports and other material published by the Division should focus on the priority issues to be addressed by the Committee in 1995 in order to enhance their usefulness at this important stage.

97. The Committee noted with appreciation that the Division for Palestinian Rights, in accordance with its mandate, continued to respond to information requests and to prepare and disseminate the following publications:

(a) Monthly bulletins covering action by the Committee, other United Nations organs, organizations and agencies, as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with the question of Palestine;

(b) A monthly chronological review of events relating to the question of Palestine, as reflected in the Arabic, English and Hebrew media, for the use of the Committee;

(c) Reports of seminars and non-governmental organization meetings;

(d) Periodic compilations of statements, declarations, documents and other material generated by the peace process;

(e) A compilation of the resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Security Council relating to the question of Palestine adopted in 1994;

(f) A special bulletin on the commemoration of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People in 1994.

98. The Committee also noted that the Division continued its programme of research and preparation of two studies (one on Jerusalem and the other on

settlements) and information notes, in close cooperation with the Bureau of the Committee.

4. United Nations information system on the question of Palestine

99. The Committee noted that the Division, in cooperation with relevant technical services of the Secretariat, had advanced in the establishment of a United Nations computer-based information system on the question of Palestine (UNISPAL), as requested by the Committee and endorsed by the General Assembly. The Committee noted that the UNISPAL Bulletin Board Service had continued to provide access to United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine and related issues and selected United Nations reports, bulletins and other documents to a number of users and that the Division had selected appropriate text-management software and had done further work in expanding its document collection and in designing the various databases that comprise UNISPAL. The Committee stressed the importance and usefulness of UNISPAL for the work of the Committee and the United Nations, as well as for other members of the international community, and called for intensified efforts to advance towards the full operation of the system and its further expansion as required.

5. International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

100. The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People was observed on 29 November 1994 at United Nations Headquarters and at the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna. The Committee noted with appreciation that the International Day had also been observed in 1994 in many other cities throughout the world. Details on the observance are contained in the special bulletin issued by the Division.

101. On the occasion of the observance of the Day an exhibit entitled "Images from Palestine" was provided by the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations at Headquarters and presented under the auspices of the Committee.

VI. ACTION TAKEN BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INFORMATION IN ACCORDANCE WITH GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 49/62 C

102. The Department of Public Information continued to provide press coverage, in English and French, of all meetings held at Headquarters of United Nations bodies dealing with the question of Palestine, including the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, and coverage in English and French of meetings, seminars and symposia of the Committee convened away from Headquarters, with the exception of a meeting in Rio de Janeiro where coverage was provided in English only. One press release in English and French was issued containing the text of a Secretary-General's statement relating to the question of Palestine, and five press releases were issued in English on the activities of UNRWA.

103. The Department cooperated at Headquarters with the Division for Palestinian Rights in media promotion and other arrangements for the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

104. The quarterly publication UN Chronicle continued its comprehensive coverage of Palestinian issues, including relevant General Assembly and Security Council actions as well as special meetings, symposia and seminars.

105. The Public Inquiries Unit of the Department responded to 323 requests for information concerning the question of Palestine and the Middle East issue between September 1994 and August 1995. During the same period, the Department's Group Programme Unit organized a total of seven briefings on the question of Palestine for various public groups visiting the United Nations. In addition, the subject was included in the presentation made to visitors taking guided tours, as appropriate.

106. The Department continued to distribute its publications, including Prerequisites for Peace in the Middle East: An Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue, based on the proceedings of the International Encounter for Journalists on the Question of Palestine, organized by the Department in cooperation with the Government of Denmark at Elsinore in June 1994. The Department also continued to distribute a "United Nations Focus" feature on the same topic.

107. From September 1994 to September 1995, the Department's Dissemination Unit distributed 63 titles on the Palestine issue to 226 recipients around the world, on Internet and other electronic networks. The materials consisted of statements and messages by the Secretary-General, press releases on encounters, seminars and symposia in Madrid, New York and Rio de Janeiro, and so on, and were disseminated in the English and French languages.

108. A 4½-minute video with the working title, "Palestine: Fifty Years On", was produced by the Media Division of the Department and distributed to all United Nations information centres and services and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) libraries. Additionally, several "UN in Action" pieces on topics such as water resource management, citrus processing and the Palestinian Police Force were videotaped during the fall.

109. The Radio Section covered various aspects of the question of Palestine and related items in news and current affairs radio programmes in official and non-official languages. Some of the topics included the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, the work of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, seminars and

symposia on the question of Palestine, and the work of the specialized agencies, for example, UNDP, UNRWA and WHO, relating to the Palestinian people. In addition, the Radio Section produced a number of feature programmes exclusively devoted to the question of Palestine, such as "Palestine/Israel: new possibilities for peace" (produced in Spanish and adapted into Portuguese); "Socio-economic Development of the Palestinian People" (produced in English and adapted into several languages); and "The Palestinian Question in the Middle East" (produced in French). All programmes were distributed worldwide.

110. The Department's Video Section produced four "UN in Action"/CNN World Report segments on the following topics: the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation in Jericho; training of the Palestinian Police Force; Palestinian women set up business in the West Bank; and agriculture in Jericho: a UNDP-assisted banana plantation.

111. On 8 December 1994, the NGO Section held a briefing for the non-governmental organization community entitled "Palestinian Economic Development: The role of the United Nations", featuring a presentation by Mr. Francis Dubois, Senior Programme Adviser, Programme of Assistance to the Palestinian People, UNDP.

112. The global network of the United Nations information centres continued to disseminate information on the question of Palestine by reaching out to mass media, academics, non-governmental organizations and the general public. The centres produced or distributed newsletters, press releases and other information materials and regularly briefed media representatives. In observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, information centres were instrumental in widely disseminating and publicizing the Secretary-General's message in local newspapers. On that day, the Information Centre in Prague participated in a public meeting organized by the Czech Association for African and Arabic Friendship. The Information Centre in Rabat mounted a special exhibit. In 1995, the Information Centre in Madrid provided support services to the Department of Public Information's Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People in the Field of Media Development. Similarly, the Information Centre in Paris, at the request of the Division for Palestinian Rights, provided logistical assistance for the United Nations Seminar on Palestine in June 1995. In addition, the network of information centres continued to send relevant press clippings and other media feedback to Headquarters to keep senior officials of the Organization abreast of the prevailing public opinion.

113. In cooperation with UNESCO and with the support of the Institute for Cooperation with the Arab World of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Department organized a Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People in the Field of Media Development in Madrid from 29 to 31 March 1995. Twenty-eight Palestinian media practitioners participated, together with representatives of international media organizations, training institutions and foundations. The Seminar adopted recommendations aiming at strengthening Palestinian media capability.

114. From 7 October to 22 November 1995, the Department organized a training programme for a group of eight Palestinian media practitioners at Headquarters to strengthen the participants' professional capacity as information media personnel.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

115. The year 1995 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. On that historic occasion, the leaders of the world solemnly reaffirmed the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their commitment to them. They expressed their determination that the United Nations would work with renewed vigour and effectiveness in promoting peace, development, equality and justice and understanding among the peoples of the world. They also reaffirmed the inalienable right of self-determination of all peoples, taking into account the particular situation of peoples under colonial or other forms of alien domination or foreign occupation. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, established 20 years ago to ensure that the Palestinian people would be able to attain these noble objectives, pledges to redouble its efforts in pursuit of this goal.

116. The signing of the Declaration of Principles in September 1993 by Israel and the PLO created a dramatic turning-point in the search for peace in the Middle East, leading to the emergence of a new reality on the ground, enabling the Palestinian people to take its first steps towards independence and opening new possibilities for cooperation among the peoples of the region. At the same time, the peace process remains fragile and fraught with dangers. The Committee is encouraged that during the past year the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have proceeded despite repeated delays and acts of violence, which have claimed many innocent victims on both sides and aroused the concern and condemnation of the international community. Welcoming the signing on 28 September 1995, in Washington, D.C., of the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Committee expresses its commitment to continue and intensify its support for the Palestinian people and its leadership during the transition process.

117. The Committee reaffirms that the United Nations has a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement is reached. The Committee reiterates that the involvement of the United Nations in the peace process, both as the guardian of international legitimacy and in the mobilization and provision of international assistance, is essential for the successful outcome of the peace efforts. As the organ of the General Assembly established to deal with the question of Palestine, the Committee believes that its own role continues to be useful and necessary during the transitional period and until a satisfactory final settlement is achieved.

118. The Committee reaffirms that such a settlement must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, and the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights, in particular the right to self-determination. The Committee also believes that, during the interim period, Israel must recognize and respect its obligations as the occupying Power under the Fourth Geneva Convention. While remaining firm on this position of principle, the Committee has continued to make adjustments in its approach and programme of work in order to make a concrete contribution to promoting the implementation of the agreements reached and to mobilize international assistance to the Palestinian people. The Committee invites the General Assembly once again to recognize the importance of its role and to reconfirm its mandate with overwhelming support.

119. The Committee wishes to express its great appreciation to those States which have supported its work and have facilitated the organization of events held under the Committee's auspices by providing venues and participating in the debates. The Committee believes that, in view of the new situation and the responsive position of the Committee reflected in its programme of work, the time has come for all States to recognize the valuable contribution that the Committee can make as a forum for dialogue, analysis, exchange of expertise, mobilization of public opinion and action in support of the peace efforts and the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, as well as their socio-economic development. The Committee considers that a broadening of its membership to include countries that support its objectives but have not hitherto participated in its work would greatly enhance the contribution of the United Nations to promote peace at this important stage.

120. The Committee considers that its seminars on economic and social issues confronting the Palestinian people in the occupied territory have been particularly useful in bringing together experts in the relevant fields, including Palestinians and Israelis, as well as donor countries, United Nations departments, agencies and organizations, non-governmental organizations active in the field and others, and will continue its efforts in that regard. In view of the new situation on the ground created by the Declaration of Principles and subsequent implementation agreements, and mindful of the measures being taken by the Palestinian Authority to establish an effective administration, which require continued international support, the Committee is of the view that one of the events under its auspices should be held as soon as possible in the territory under the Palestinian Authority to address various aspects of the transition period.

121. The Committee also stresses the value of its role as a catalyst in bringing together and developing a network of non-governmental organizations interested in the question of Palestine and in promoting solidarity activities, as well as concrete assistance. The Committee intends to continue to promote the positive contribution of the non-governmental organization constituency to meet the humanitarian and development needs of the Palestinian people during the transitional period, in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority. Noting with appreciation the increasing interest and participation of Governments, in particular those of donor countries, and United Nations organizations and agencies in non-governmental organization events organized under its auspices, the Committee intends to continue its programme of meetings in the various regions in the coming year. The Committee will continue to seek to structure these meetings for maximum usefulness and to cooperate with coordinating committees for non-governmental organizations with a view to developing effective follow-up mechanisms and encouraging a wider and more active participation by non-governmental organizations, in particular those whose work encompasses humanitarian and development-oriented ends and programmes.

122. The Committee emphasizes the essential contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights as a centre for research, monitoring, the preparation of studies and the collection and dissemination of information on all issues related to the question of Palestine. The Committee requests the Division to continue its programme of publications, in consultation with the Committee, and to pay particular attention to preparing studies or updating existing ones on the various issues that are subject to final status negotiations. The Committee notes with satisfaction the progress made in including in UNISPAL documentation on the relevant activities of the United Nations system and the non-governmental organization network, as well as other information material, including documents related to the peace process. Recalling that the Division was established at

the request of the General Assembly in 1978 and upgraded in 1982, and that its mandate has been reaffirmed and expanded in various resolutions since then, the Committee requests the Secretary-General to maintain the political structure and composition of the Division in accordance with those resolutions, and to continue to provide it with the necessary resources in order to carry out its tasks.

123. The Committee continues to consider that the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information is very useful in raising the awareness of the international community concerning the complexities of the question and the situation in the Middle East in general. The Committee believes that the Programme is contributing effectively to an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and supportive of the peace process. The Programme should follow and reflect realities related to the new experiences of the Palestinian people, provide assistance in the field of Palestinian media development and continue to disseminate information about the just cause of the Palestinian people, in addition to continuing its support of dialogue in the effort to build peace.

124. The Committee will continue to strive to achieve maximum effectiveness in the implementation of its mandate and to adjust its work programme in the light of developments, in order to continue to contribute, to the extent possible, to the realization of the common United Nations objective of achieving a just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine.

Notes

1/ Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 47/1 of 22 September 1992, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) did not participate in the work of the Committee.

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-first Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/31/35).

3/ Ibid., Thirty-second Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/32/35); ibid., Thirty-third Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/33/35); ibid., Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/34/35 and Corr.1); ibid., Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/35/35); ibid., Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/36/35); ibid., Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/37/35 and Corr.1); ibid., Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/38/35); ibid., Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/39/35); ibid., Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/40/35); ibid., Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/41/35); ibid., Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/42/35); ibid., Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/43/35); ibid., Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/44/35); ibid., Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/45/35); ibid., Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/46/35); ibid., Forty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/47/35); ibid., Forty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/48/35); and ibid., Forty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 35 (A/49/35).

4/ A/AC.183/1995/CRP.1.

5/ The observers at the Committee meetings were as follows: Algeria, Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, Ecuador, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Mauritania, Morocco, Nicaragua, Niger, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates, Viet Nam, the League of Arab States

and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Palestine, represented by the PLO, as the representative of the Palestinian people, was also an observer.

6/ The membership of the Working Group was as follows: Afghanistan, Belarus, Cuba, Guinea, Guyana, India, Malta, Pakistan, Senegal, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine and Palestine, represented by the PLO, as the representative of the people directly concerned.

7/ See S/1995/151.

8/ See S/PV.3505 (resumption).

9/ S/1995/366.

10/ S/1995/367.

11/ S/1995/394.

12/ WHO/16.